

# A Letter to Parents on Blocks



## What We Do and Why

Blocks, the hard wood units that come in proportional sizes and shapes, are one of the most valuable learning materials in our classroom. When they build with blocks, children learn about sizes and shapes, spatial relationships, math concepts, and problem solving. When children lift, shove, stack and move blocks, they learn about weight and size. Each time they use blocks, they are making decisions about how to build a structure or solve a construction problem.

When children build with blocks in the classroom, we encourage them to talk about what they are doing. For example, we might say:

- “Tell me about your building.”
- “How did you decide to put those blocks together?”

We also ask questions that help children extend their thinking about their block play. For example, we might say:

- “You built a tall apartment house. How do the people get to their floor?”
- “How many blocks do you think it will take to fill up that space?”
- “Where do people park their cars when they come to visit the shopping center?”

These questions and comments are designed to help the children become aware of what they are doing and think of ways to extend their work.

## What You Can Do At Home

Hardwood unit blocks are expensive, but there are several other types of blocks you might want to have at home to support your child’s learning. For example, you might wish to purchase table blocks, colored wooden cube clocks, or cardboard brick blocks.

Small blocks can be stored in shoe boxes or plastic tubs and containers. You can put a picture label on the container so your child knows where these materials belong. Identify a place where your child can build and play with the blocks, either on the floor or a table. As your child builds with the blocks, you can talk about the structure and ask questions. Props such as clothespins, small plastic animals, and cars and trucks will extend your child’s play and inspire new ideas. Playing with large or small blocks, your child can learn to:

- Judge distance, space, and size
- Create scenes for dramatic play
- Stack blocks carefully (using eye-hand coordination and small muscle control)
- Compare and sort by size and shape
- Use words to describe a construction

Perhaps the most important contribution you can make to your child’s learning through blocks is to take an interest in what your child does, both at home and at school. We welcome you to visit the classroom at any time so you can see for yourself how much your child is learning.